

A Single Door to Government



America needs a Service USA—one unified portal where every citizen can access their government. Imagine logging into a single website, visiting one office, or calling one number to handle everything from Social Security to passport renewals. This isn't a far-fetched dream; it's already working in other countries, and we deserve nothing less.

When Maria lost her job last year, she spent weeks bouncing between different government websites and offices. She needed unemployment benefits from her state workforce agency, health insurance options from healthcare.gov, food assistance from another department, and information about her retirement accounts from the Social Security Administration. Each system required separate accounts, passwords, and verification processes. Maria wasted precious time and energy navigating bureaucracy when she should have been focusing on finding a new job.

Maria's experience isn't unique. Americans waste millions of hours each year trying to find the right government door to knock on. We've accepted this inefficiency for too long.

The Service USA Vision

Service USA would create a single account that connects you to every federal service you need. You'd log in once to access:

Your Social Security information and benefits
Tax filing and records from the IRS
Medicare and health insurance options
Veterans benefits
Passport applications and renewals
Federal student aid
Small business resources
Immigration and citizenship services

For state-administered programs like unemployment insurance or driver's licenses, the portal would connect you directly to your state's systems without requiring new accounts or verification.

The platform would also serve as your civic information center, showing you:

Who represents you in Congress and how to contact them
How your representatives voted on recent legislation
Upcoming bills and hearings relevant to your interests
Federal budget information presented in understandable formats
Local federal offices and resources in your community

Service Canada: A Model That Works

Our neighbors to the north have already proven this concept works. In 2005, Canada launched Service Canada as a unified access point for federal programs. Canadians now visit Service Canada in person, online, or by phone to handle everything from pension benefits to unemployment claims to passport services.

The results speak for themselves. Service Canada processes over 87 million transactions annually, manages \$170 billion in benefits, and maintains customer satisfaction rates above 80%. Most importantly, it saves Canadians time and frustration by eliminating the need to navigate multiple government systems.

Global Best Practices

Canada isn't alone in streamlining government services:

Estonia created a digital society where citizens handle 99% of government services online through a single portal. Estonians vote, pay taxes, sign documents, and access health records with one digital identity. The system saves an estimated 2% of GDP annually.

Singapore's LifeSG app brings together more than 40 government services, personalized to each citizen's needs based on their life stage. New parents, for instance, see birth registration and childcare subsidy information prominently displayed.

Australia's myGov portal connects citizens to Medicare, tax services, child support, and more through one account. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the system efficiently delivered emergency payments to millions of Australians in days, not weeks.

The United Kingdom's GOV.UK platform unified hundreds of separate government websites into one user-friendly system designed around people's needs rather than agency structures. The redesign saves the UK government £61.5 million annually.

Building a Better System

Creating Service USA won't happen overnight. It requires federal agencies to break down silos and rebuild systems around citizens' needs rather than bureaucratic convenience. The transition would need:

A phased implementation starting with the most commonly used services Robust privacy protections and security measures Accessibility features ensuring all Americans can use

the system regardless of ability Physical service centers for those who prefer in-person assistance Training for government employees across agencies

While the initial investment would be substantial, the long-term savings would be greater. The federal government currently spends billions maintaining duplicate IT systems, processing redundant paperwork, and staffing fragmented customer service operations.

More importantly, Service USA would return millions of hours to the American people—time currently wasted navigating bureaucracy that could be spent working, caring for family, or contributing to communities.

Additional Federal Programs for Service USA

Service USA could integrate numerous other federal programs beyond the core services already mentioned. Here are additional federal programs and services that would benefit from inclusion:

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services already manages several critical programs that could be integrated into Service USA. Beyond basic Medicare enrollment, the portal could handle Medicare Part D prescription plans, Medicare Advantage options, and Medicare Supplement Insurance comparisons. The same applies to the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Affordable Care Act marketplace plans.
- The Food and Drug Administration could provide personalized alerts about medication recalls affecting prescriptions you've registered in the system. The CDC could offer tailored health recommendations based on your age, location, and health profile.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development offers numerous programs that Americans struggle to navigate. Service USA could streamline access to Section 8 housing vouchers, FHA loan applications, fair housing complaint filings, and homeless assistance programs. First-time homebuyers could receive guidance on available federal assistance without needing to know which specific program to search for.
- The Environmental Protection Agency manages programs affecting communities nationwide. Citizens could access local environmental quality reports, file environmental complaints, check compliance records of nearby facilities, and receive alerts about environmental hazards in their area.
- The Department of Transportation could integrate services like TSA PreCheck enrollment, REAL ID information, and traffic safety data. The Federal Aviation

Administration could provide a streamlined system for drone registration and pilot licensing. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration could send targeted vehicle recall notices based on your registered vehicles.

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, and other consumer protection agencies could offer a unified complaint system. Americans could report scams, check if they're eligible for settlements from enforcement actions, and receive fraud alerts relevant to their region.
- The Department of Agriculture manages programs from farm subsidies to nutrition assistance. Farmers could access unified information about crop insurance, conservation programs, and disaster assistance. Urban residents could locate nearby farmers markets accepting SNAP benefits.
- Beyond student loans, the Department of Education could provide personalized information about educational opportunities - from apprenticeship programs to continuing education grants. Parents could receive notifications about changes to education policies affecting their children's schools.
- The Department of Justice could offer streamlined access to services like the National Criminal History Check system, Freedom of Information Act requests, and civil rights violation reporting. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services could provide status tracking for all immigration applications and proceedings through the same portal.
- The Office of Personnel Management could integrate all federal job listings, application status tracking, and benefits management for federal employees into Service USA. Current federal workers could manage their Thrift Savings Plan, health benefits, and retirement planning in one place.
- FEMA could provide disaster preparedness information tailored to your location, streamlined disaster assistance applications, and real-time emergency alerts. The portal could automatically determine your eligibility for various forms of disaster assistance after entering basic information about damage sustained.

The power of Service USA would lie in its ability to connect these diverse programs. Rather than organizing by agency structure, the system would present services based on life events and needs. A person experiencing job loss, for instance, would see a comprehensive package of relevant programs spanning multiple agencies - from unemployment insurance to healthcare options to mortgage forbearance programs - all accessible through their single Service USA account.

This integrated approach would not only simplify access for citizens but would also help identify gaps in service coverage and reduce duplicate applications across programs with similar eligibility requirements.

What This Means For You

Consider how Service USA would transform your interactions with government:

James, a veteran starting college, would complete one application connecting him to both VA education benefits and federal student aid, rather than navigating separate systems.

Sophia, who cares for her aging parents, would manage their Medicare, Social Security, and tax information through a single dashboard, with notifications about benefit changes or required actions.

Michael, launching a small business, would find all federal requirements, from tax ID registration to labor law compliance, in one place instead of researching multiple agency websites.

Creating Service USA requires political will and citizen demand. Other countries have shown that governments can transform themselves to work better for people. Americans deserve nothing less.

We built the interstate highway system to connect our country physically. We now need the digital equivalent—an information superhighway connecting citizens directly to their government services. Service USA would strengthen democracy by making government more accessible, transparent, and responsive to all Americans.

The technology exists. The successful models exist. All that's missing is our commitment to build a government that works as well as its people.

Challenges

Several significant barriers prevent the creation of a unified government service portal like Service USA in the United States:

Legacy Systems and Technical Debt The federal government operates thousands of separate IT systems, many of which are decades old and built on outdated technology. These systems weren't designed to communicate with each other, and retrofitting them for interoperability requires substantial technical work. The IRS, for example, still relies on programming languages from the 1960s for core functions.

Fragmented Governance Structure Unlike more centralized governments, the U.S. has a federalist system where power is distributed between federal, state, and local governments. Many services that citizens need are administered at the state level with

federal funding but local implementation, creating a complex web of responsibilities that's difficult to unify under one portal.

Agency Independence and Turf Protection Federal agencies have historically operated as independent entities with their own budgets, priorities, and congressional oversight. Agencies often resist initiatives that might reduce their autonomy or shift control of their services to a centralized platform.

Privacy and Data-Sharing Concerns Legal barriers like the Privacy Act limit how agencies can share citizen data with each other. Creating a unified portal would require addressing complex questions about data ownership, consent, and appropriate use of personal information across government entities.

Funding Challenges Building such a system would require significant upfront investment spanning multiple budget cycles and administrations. Government technology projects often struggle to secure consistent funding, especially when benefits might not be realized until after current elected officials leave office.

Procurement and Implementation Hurdles Federal technology procurement processes are notoriously slow and complex. Major IT projects typically take years just to move through the contracting process, and government technology initiatives have a high failure rate compared to private sector projects.

Political Considerations There's no strong political constituency advocating for government modernization. Politicians gain more visibility championing specific programs than pushing for back-end improvements to government operations. Without sustained political will across administrations, ambitious modernization efforts often lose momentum.

Cybersecurity Risks Creating a single portal for all government services would also create a single point of failure for cybersecurity. The more integrated government systems become, the more complicated security becomes and the more attractive they are as targets for malicious actors.

Despite these challenges, incremental progress is happening. Initiatives like Login.gov aim to create a single sign-on for government services, and some agencies are working to streamline their digital services under the guidance of the U.S. Digital Service and the General Services Administration's Technology Transformation Service.